

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 FREETO 02119 081706Z

ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 IGA-02 SS-15 SP-02 L-03

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O R 081635Z JUL 77

FM AMEMBASSY FREETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5693

INFO AMEMBASSY CONAKRY

AMEMBASSY MONROVIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L FREETOWN 2119

SECSTATE ALSO FOR AID

MONROVIA ALSO FOR AID

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAID

SUBJ: PRESIDENT STEVENS WARNS ON OICI

1. LAST NIGHT, JUL 7, THE SECRETARY TO PRESIDENT STEVENS CALLED TO SAY THAT THE PRESIDENT WANTED TO SEE HERBERT BOYER, DIRECTOR OF OICI, AND MYSELF IN HIS OFFICE TODAY AT NOON. ALL THE SECRETARY WOULD SAY WAS THAT THE PRESIDENT WANTED TO DISCUSS OICI'S PROGRAM AND THAT THE MINISTERS OF EDUCATION AND LABOR WOULD BE PRESENT. WHEN WE WERE ESCORTED INTO THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE WE FOUND VICE PRESIDENT KOROMA AND PRIME MINISTER KAMARA-TAYLOR ALSO IN ATTENDANCE.

2. STEVENS APOLOGIZED FOR CONVENING THE MEETING ON SUCH SHORT NOTICE BUT SAID THE MATTER HE WANTED TO DISCUSS WAS SO URGENT IT COULD NOT BE DEFERRED. HE THEN WENT ON TO EXPRESS HIS DISAPPOINTMENT AND ANGER AT THE WAY OICI WAS CONDUCTING ITSELF IN SIERRA LEONE AND WARNED THAT CONTINUANCE WOULD LEAD TO DAMAGING OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE U.S. AND SIERRA LEONE. HE SAID THAT OICI HAD HIRED TWO MEN WITH UNSAVORY REPUTATIONS
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WHO WERE BEING PAID SALARY SCALES FIVE TIMES THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT SALARY SCALES FOR SIMILAR WORK. STEVENS SAID HE APPRECIATED THE INTENT OF OICI TO TRAIN SCHOOL DROPOUTS BUT HE COULD NOT ACCEPT OICI HIRING SOCIAL DROPOUTS TO TEACH SCHOOL DROPOUTS.

3. THE PRESIDENT SAID HE DIDN'T BLAME THE AMERICAN STAFF OF

OICI FOR WHAT HAPPENED "THEY DON'T KNOW ANY BETTER." HE CHARACTERIZED THE LOCAL OICI BOARD OF DIRECTORS AS INCONSEQUENTIAL AND INTIMATED THEY WERE POLITICALLY MOTIVATED IN THEIR ACTIONS. HE SAID THE ACTIONS OF OICI COULD LEAD TO SPECULATIONS BY UNINFORMED PEOPLE THAT IT WAS A COVER FOR CIA OPERATIONS. HE ASKED RHETORICALLY WHETHER OICI THOUGHT IT COULD OPERATE INDEPENDENTLY OF THE CONCERNS OF THE GOVERNMENT. HE CONCLUDED BY APOLOGIZING FOR SPEAKING SO DIRECTLY AND FORCIBLY BUT SAID THE CIRCUMSTANCES WARRANTED NO OTHER APPROACH.

4. I TOLD THE PRESIDENT I WAS DEEPLY GRATEFUL HE HAD CONVENED THE MEETING AND WAS MOST APPRECIATIVE OF HIS FRANKNESS. I ASSURED HIM THAT NEITHER I NOR MR. BOYER WANTED TO DO ANYTHING TO DAMAGE THE FRIENDLY RELATIONS BETWEEN SIERRA LEONE AND THE UNITED STATES. I SAID I RECALLED HE HAD CONVENED A MEETING IN FEBRUARY (MEMO FOR THE RECORD DATED MARCH 22, 1977) AT WHICH HE HAD EXPRESSED SIMILAR CONCERNS. I SAID I WAS DISMAYED AND SURPRISED THESE PROBLEMS STILL EXISTED AND SUGGESTED THAT MR. BOYER AND I MEET WITH THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION THIS AFTERNOON TO RESOLVE THE PROBLEMS.

5. THE PRESIDENT ACCEPTED MY SUGGESTION AND SAID HE WOULD CONVENE ANOTHER MEETING ON THIS SUBJECT NEXT WEEK AND THAT THE MATTER WOULD BE DISCUSSED WITH AMBASSADOR LINEHAN AT AN EARLY DATE.

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6. UPON LEAVING THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE I ASKED BOYER IF THE SAME INDIVIDUAL THE PRESIDENT HAD CHARACTERIZED IN THE FEBRUARY MEETING AS UNDESIRABLE WAS EMPLOYED BY OICI. TO MY SURPRISE AND DISMAY BOYER SAID HE WAS. IN A LONG ELABORATION BOYER TRIED TO EXPLAIN HE HAD RECOMMENDED THE INDIVIDUAL NOT BE HIRED BUT HAD BEEN OVERRULED BY HIS LOCAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

7. LATER IN MY OFFICE I TOLD BOYER THE HIRING OF THIS MAN WAS AN ACT OF APPALLING JUDGEMENT. I SAID THAT HE NOT THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE OPERATION OF OICI AND THAT THE BOARD APPARENTLY WAS GIVING HIM BAD ADVICE. I RECEIVED FROM BOYER A PROMISE THAT THE TWO INDIVIDUALS WOULD BE FIRED AND HIS AGREEMENT THAT THE PRESENT BOARD WOULD BE DISSOLVED.

8. EMBASSY COMMENT: BOYER MAY BE COMPETENT TO RUN AN OIC PROJECT IN THE U.S., BUT HE CLEARLY IS OUT OF HIS ELEMENT IN AFRICA. I HOPE WE CAN SALVAGE SOMETHING OF OICI'S REPUTATION IN SIERRA LEONE, BUT I'M NOT CERTAIN. IN THE MEETING WITH THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION I WILL REQUEST THE ASSIGNMENT OF A PROJECT COORDINATOR FROM THE MINISTRY TO PRECLUDE FURTHER

POLITICAL GAFFES. THE EMBASSY SIMPLY DOES NOT HAVE THE
RESOURCES TO WATCHDOG ON A CONTINUING BASIS THE OPERATIONS
OF A PVO OPERATING 200 MILES FROM FREETOWN. HOWEVER, TERMINA-
TION OF OICI'S OPERATIONS NOW MAY VERY WELL PROVIDE FUEL TO
THOSE WHO MIGHT SPECULATE THAT OICI REALLY IS A CIA OPERATION.
END EMBASSY COMMENT.
NORTH

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Message Attributes

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